

SIX MYTHS ABOUT NSA

MYTH

NSA monitors the world's communications systems at all times.

REALITY

NSA is not an indiscriminate vacuum, collecting anything and everything. It performs its work with laser focus – and “foreign” is the operative word.

The Agency collects, monitors, and analyzes a variety of foreign signals and communications for indications of threats to the Nation and for information of value to the U.S. Government.

The data that NSA processes are invaluable to national security. They help the Agency to determine where adversaries are located, what they're planning, when they're planning to carry it out, with whom they're working, and the kinds of weapons they're using.

MYTH

The National Security Agency is in charge of domestic cybersecurity measures.

REALITY

Within the U.S. Government, the Department of Homeland Security has the lead to secure civilian information and communications systems for the Executive Branch. DHS works with industry and

sector-specific agencies to protect privately owned and operated critical infrastructure. DHS also works with state, local, tribal, and territorial governments to secure their information systems.

NSA provides technical expertise to Federal customers, including DHS, and national leaders. Additionally, NSA has valuable partnerships with America's Allies. Addressing cyber threats requires a team effort across the Federal Government and with the private sector.

MYTH

NSA sets its own agenda.

REALITY

Everything that NSA does is in response to a specific intelligence requirement. The Agency does not create the requirements under which it operates. This is done by the President and other U.S. leaders.

NSA partners with other agencies, private industry, and academia to find solutions to protecting the Nation's critical infrastructure and national security information.

MYTH

NSA has agents who can arrest hackers or other cyber bad guys.

REALITY

NSA is not a law enforcement agency.

MYTH

NSA and U.S. Cyber Command are one and the same.

REALITY

NSA and U.S. Cyber Command are separate and distinct organizations. They operate independently and under different legal authorities. NSA provides the same high-quality support to USCYBERCOM as it does to other customers, with full lawfulness and integrity.

MYTH

Cyber threats would be greatly reduced if the United States focused on only one or two particular nations.

REALITY

The U.S. Government must constantly adjust and improve its cyber defenses – whether attacks or intrusions are carried out by particular countries or non-state actors. ■